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AUTHOR Hoenninger, Ronald; Black, Richard A.
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ABSTRACT

The premise of this paper is that adult education is different from secondary and college education because adult students have different needs than younger students. Adult education requires coordinated planning, effective guidance and counseling, improvement in faculty training, and curricula that meet the demands of mature students. A model for adult education programs is presented which provides for a centralized administration of resources and services supervised by the community college Dean of Community Education and Services. This administrator is assisted by an advisory committee composed of citizens and faculty members. Faculty and counselors are recruited from each local district as well as from the community college staff. The community college is responsible for developing and conducting inservice professional education programs. Curriculum, staff selection, and instruction are determined primarily by the school district. The management and distribution of resources is thus accomplished at a centralized level while educational decisions directly affecting the citizen are made by those closest to him. (Author/SW)

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ADULT EDUCATION: SOME NECESSARY PRE-REQUISITES

by

Ronald Hoenninger and Richard A. Black

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Few would question whether adult programs are worthy endeavors. However, whether the Junior or Community College is by nature an adult educator is questionable. Why aren't Community Colleges inherent experts? We would like to consider this question and then present some pre-requisites for effectively dealing with adult students. Finally, we will propose what we feel to be a workable model for the Community College.

A First concern is institutional philosophy (or lack of same) which may cause the institution to be out-of-touch with the adult population's needs and the methods to meet them. Such a philosophy can exclude community interests while coining the phrases "community services" and "adult education" to make catalogs look gracious and appease the appetite of visitation and accrediting teams.

Full Time Equivalency (FTE) based on "college credit" as opposed to "community service credit" or "continuing education credit" is the major source of state support. Since both academic and occupational programs produce the bulk of enrollment, the emphasis is on recruitment of secondary students to generate "FTE" money. Academic transfer programs are less expensive to begin and maintain and occupational education, while highly funded at the state and federal level, helps to gain a foothold on the ladder of accountability. Enrollment figures and numbers of graduates become sacred statistics.

Junior colleges are new institutions competing for recognition publically and within the educational fraternity. Accreditation is

primarily based on academic offerings established by the older parent (I'm OK, You're not OK) four-year institutions. However, little more than lip service and a minimum of personnel are committed to adult education because it necessitates certain structural and procedural elements not ordinarily found in traditional institutions. Off campus classes and activities, non-degree instructional personnel, a movement away from admission requirements, and a disregard for the academic calendar challenge the traditional academic philosophy. Deputy Commissioner Willian Pierce (1973) recently chided Junior Colleges, stating "it's my perception that at least as much as the secondary schools, you've become wall bound. You don't break out and take your programs to your people--where they are--in stores, in factories, in secondary, elementary, and private schools. You demand they come to you. Too many can't or won't..."

A second element is personnel. Faculty are recruited largely from secondary school settings. They come to the college with backgrounds of secondary teaching experience but with little or no special training in adult learning theory, adult psychology, characteristics of adult students, or methods of adult instruction.

Most faculty are reluctant to leave the immediate campus to teach. They perceive the college as a cloistered little nook where people arrive to be educated or become a professional.

Administrators are frequently traditionalists offering courses they feel are relevant while making little effort to find out what adults really want. Their major concerns are quantity, credit, and diplomas. They desire to keep programs and people in close proximity

where they are easily controllable and cause the administrator little discomfort.

Counselors for the most part are prepared to deal with secondary or college students. Few have the background or necessary training to deal with adults, and most adult counselors are siphoned from the ranks of school counselors. There is a specific need for competently trained adult counselors.

Our premise is that adult education is differend because adult students are different. The concept of life-long education implies co-ordinated planning, effective guidance and counseling, improvement in faculty training, and curricula that meet the demands of mature students.

Some Necessary Pre-Requisites

We must first recognize current educational trends and incorporate these into both short and long range planning. According to Deputy Commissioner Pierce (1973), "adult education in its broadcast definition will be the wave of the future." Expansion in enrollments will be in the 30 and over bracket. Fifty percent of the population will be above age 50 (Gleazer, 1973).

Taxpayers are likewise consumers. They increasingly demand that education serve people of all ages. Many current enrollees are not particularly interested in achieving a degree/certificate. They feel the value and significance of a community college is measured by whether or not individual goals are achieved. This has implications for both the programs and the process of adult education.

Secondly, we must pay closer attention to adult attitudes and

opinions. In the February 5, 1973 edition of The Chronicle of Higher Education, Robert T. Jacobson reported the recommendations of a commission which studied the attitudes of the nation's adults on "basic, continuing and recurrent education." Basic findings were:

1. The Commission believes that in the U.S., most organized forms of adult learning will probably be sponsored by institutions other than colleges and universities.

2. The major theme of the report is that colleges should shift their emphasis from degree-granting to providing service to learners.

3. Forty-three percent of the adults surveyed named vocational subjects as their first choice. Hobbied--recreation and general education ranked second and third.

The point is that most of the adults in the study preferred public high school programs, employer-sponsored training programs, opportunities offered by religious, social, and community organizations. These findings have been interpreted to indicate a change in the value traditionally attached to certain types of education and to the places where that education is offered. (Rumpf, 1973) The commission implied that if we choose to open doors for new sorts of student populations, we had better make sure we have workable plans for doing so.

Thirdly, we must devote sincere effort to professional development of both personnel and curricula. Teachers need special training to relate to adult students and to appreciate their learning problems. Administrators need to understand the role of adult education and to recognize that it is a shared responsibility involving other service agencies and all pertinent community resources. They need to be aggressive in integrating these forces and clarifying their responsibilities to avoid duplication of effort.

The curriculum must be broadly conceived and the settings in which it is offered equally diverse. It should offer the options of "cafeteria style" learning units, providing each adult with learning experiences that focus on desired goals. There must be a concerted effort to take the program to the people off campus wherever feasible. An individual should be able to enter an activity believing that he will leave it with a skill or a new understanding which will enable him to remedy a realized deficiency.

A Fourth concern is the adult learner. Knowles (1972) has suggested ways in which adults differ in the learning situation. McClusky (1971) has addressed himself to the psychological and mental development of the adult learner. Both note that many adults have had negative educational experiences. School years were anxious, unpleasant ones, during which the individual "learned" to perceive himself as a failure. It is naive to think that such individuals will want to re-enter the traditional education cycle and submit themselves to the possible recurrence of fears and frustrations, past products of confrontations with teachers, classrooms, curricula and grades. Knowles and McClusky also point out how adults differ in self-concept, experience, readiness to learn, and orientation to learning. Adult education is a student-centered problem-oriented technology.

A Model to Follow

It is not our purpose to challenge the legitimacy of the adult education function of the Community College. Any college that calls itself a "community" institution should reflect the interests of the

community. Certainly, adult citizens comprise a substantial group for which services should be made available.

Rather, we are striving to avoid programs that are administered in ways that undermine their most laudable goals and objections. We are suggesting that well intentioned personnel act in good faith but, because of inadequacies in the organizational structure, fail to achieve their best intentions.

Harold Hodgkinson, Center for Research and Development in Higher Education, advocates incorporating the best of both centralization and decentralization. Those decisions which relate to logistics, resource management, and support services should be made at the highest levels. Where possible, all other decisions should be made at levels closest to those directly involved. (Hodgkinson, 1970)

In terms of adult education programs, we suggest a model which provides for a centralized administration of resources and services supervised by the college's Dean of Community Education and Services. This administrator is assisted by an advisory committee composed of citizens and faculty members interested in off-campus instruction. The program operates in each local public school district under the direction of the local superintendent and a supervisor, both of whom are close to the people's needs.

Faculty and counselors are recruited from each local district as well as from the community college staff. Competency in teaching and relating to adult students is the predominant criterion for selection. Administrators, teachers, and counselors are reimbursed by the community college from fees, state aid, and federal support. The Dean of Community Education and Services is responsible for obtaining, managing, and distributing resources. He also assists the local directors in the public

relations aspects of their programs.

Curriculum, staff selection, modes of instruction, and instructional materials are determined by the local supervisor. The community college provides staff support services and advisory expertise in each of these areas but primary responsibility remains within the neighborhood school district.

The community college is responsible for developing and conducting inservice professional education programs. These programs provide initial training for new teachers and periodic renewal for established personnel.

The college provides expertise in the continual assessment of community-wide and local district needs. It also helps to design and implement evaluation procedures for determining the impact of educational programs.

In short, we advocate a model in which the management and distribution of resources is accomplished at a centralized level while educational decisions which directly affect the community's citizens are made by those closest to the real needs of the people.

This model assumes that those most competent to perform a particular function should do so. This is certainly not a radical or recent assumption. Plato embodied the same concept in his Republic over 2000 years ago. What may be difficult to accept is the assumption that the professional staff of the community college may not always be the most competent to make decisions affecting the adult education program. Perhaps, accepting this is the initial pre-requisite for flexible and responsive educational programs.

Conclusion

The idea that "adults are different" implies that they not only differ from children but that they also differ from each other. In the same manner,

communities differ because they are composed of citizens with varied needs, interests, and abilities. Adult education will become a reality in the truly comprehensive community college of the future. It will employ the pre-requisites for profitable programs, recognizing the worth of individuals in determining their needs and designing their own programs.

We live in an age of consumerism but consumers basically seek out products which meet their individual requirements. Madison Avenue sales techniques may be able to create fads of the moment, but the enduring adult education program must produce the staples necessary for living a full and rewarding life. Otherwise, we will see few signs of people "bullish" on the community college. As Roger Yarrington (1973) stated, "Consumers are developing a very healthy concern about value received for value paid. Institutions of higher education that live on tuition and taxes do not enjoy immunity from that concern."

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